

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY D/HA:FASIEVERTS:JS

APPROVED BY EA - RHMILLER

EA/VLC - MR. SPEAR

EA/VLC - MR. ROSENTHAL

DOD/ISA - DR. SHIELDS

D/HA - MR. WILSON

S/S - APSHANKLE

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE IMMEDIATE

JCRC SAMAE SAN THAI IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

CINCPAC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 035160

EXDIS MIL ADDEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: CASC, PFOR, VS, US

SUBJECT: LETTER FROM UNHCR REP IN HANOI REGARDING
MARINE REMAINS AND RELATED MATTERS

REFS: A) VIENTIANE 332; B) VIENTIANE 0359

STATE/DEFENSE MESSAGE

1. WE WELCOME DRV'S APPARENT INTEREST IN MIA/BNR SITUATION
AS REFLECTED IN HAN'S LATEST LETTER. HOWEVER, WE ARE CON-
CERNED AT DRV'S APPARENT DETERMINATION TO COMPLETE BODY
IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES BEFORE RETURNING REMAINS. WE
HOPE HAN UNDERSTANDS, AND WILL EXPLAIN TO VIETNAMESE, THAT
IT WOULD BE FAR SIMPLER AND MORE EFFICIENT TO RETURN UN-
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IDENTIFIED REMAINS WITH WHATEVER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE

ON EACH CASE (SUCH AS DATE/PLACE OF LOSS/RECOVERY) FOR PROCESSING AT OUR CENTRAL IDENTIFICATION LABORATORY.

2. WE WOULD OF COURSE BE GLAD TO HELP THE VIETNAMESE THEMSELVES TO IDENTIFY REMAINS TO THE EXTENT THIS IS PRACTICAL. IN SPECIFIC CASES WHERE THEY WANT TO CONFIRM IDENTITIES, WE WILL BE GLAD TO PROVIDE DOSSIERS ON THE INDIVIDUALS CONCERNED, AS WAS DONE IN THE CASE OF THE TWO MARINES. BUT WE DO NOT THINK IT WOULD BE USEFUL OR PRACTICAL TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARILY VOLUMINOUS DATA THAT WOULD BE NEEDED TO ATTEMPT IDENTIFICATIONS IN GENERAL, E.G., OF ALL NEGRO MIA/BNR'S IN SVN.

3. WE HAVE SHARED REFTEL AND PREVIOUS MESSAGES ON THIS SUBJECT WITH HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON MIA'S, AND WITH SENATOR KENNEDY'S REFUGEE SUBCOMMITTEE STAFF (BECAUSE OF THEIR INTEREST IN RETURN OF MARINE BODIES). (THIS HAS BEEN DONE ON BASIS OF STRICT CONFIDENCE WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON NEED TO PROTECT HAN.)

4. SELECT COMMITTEE ALREADY WAS CONSIDERING A MESSAGE TO DRV SUGGESTING A RETURN VISIT TO HANOI TO DISCUSS MIA/BNR QUESTIONS, AND THEY NOW PLAN TO PROPOSE SUCH A VISIT FOR THE SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING REMAINS IDENTIFICATION AND RECOVERY, WITH THE SUGGESTION THAT THEY BRING REMAINS IDENTIFICATION EXPERTS WITH THEM AGAIN TO HANOI, THIS TIME FOR SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION OF THIS PROBLEM.

5. SELECT COMMITTEE COULD CONVENIENTLY VISIT HANOI AT EASTER BREAK (APRIL 16-24) AND WILL PROBABLY SUGGEST THIS IN WHATEVER MESSAGE IT SENDS. (IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO ARRANGE AN EARLIER VISIT BY COMMITTEE STAFF MEMBERS WITH REMAINS IDENTIFICATION EXPERTS IF THIS APPEARED DESIRABLE.)

6. REGARDING HAN'S SPECIFIC REQUESTS, WE AND CONGRESSIONAL REPS ARE COMPILING MATERIAL ON POINTS C-F OF PARA FOUR, INCLUDING PRESS CLIPPINGS ON THE DECEMBER RETURN OF REMAINS TO ADD TO THOSE COLLECTED BY JCRC. WE UNDERSTAND JCRC IS RESPONDING TO REQUEST FOR "ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES." JCRC SHOULD ALSO COMPILE COMPLETE AS POSSIBLE INFO ON CONFIDENTIAL

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MONGOLOID REMAINS, WHICH SHOULD BE SENT HERE FOR SELECT COMMITTEE AS WELL AS TO VIENTIANE.

7. REFLECTING FOREGOING, WE SUGGEST YOUR PROPOSED REPLY TO HAN BE REVISED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

(A) ACCORDING TO OUR RECORDS THERE WERE NO OTHER AMERICAN CASUALTIES LEFT IN OR NEAR THE SDA HOSPITAL, BUT WE CANNOT

BE CERTAIN THERE WERE NOT.

(B) WE HOPE YOU WILL AGAIN CONVEY TO THE VIETNAMESE OUR RECOGNITION THAT IDENTIFICATION OF UNKNOWN REMAINS CAN BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT, AND OUR READINESS TO ACCEPT UNIDENTIFIED REMAINS REGARDLESS OF THEIR CONDITION.

(C) REGARDING FILES ON MIAS OF NEGRO ORIGIN IN SVN, THERE ARE SO MANY OF THESE THAT WE DO NOT THINK IT WOULD BE PRACTICAL TO PROVIDE THEM. FILES CAN BE PROVIDED TO VERIFY SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATIONS (AS IN CASES OF JUDGE AND MACMAHON). IN OTHER CASES IT WOULD BE BEST FOR REMAINS TO BE SENT TO OUR CIL IN THAILAND FOR IDENTIFICATION PROCESSING.

(D) WE UNDERSTAND THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON MISSING PERSONS CHAIRED BY REPRESENTATIVE MONTGOMERY WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEM OF REMAINS IDENTIFICATION AND RECOVERY FURTHER WITH DRV REPRESENTATIVES, POSSIBLY DURING A RETURN VISIT TO HANOI DURING THE CONGRESSIONAL EASTER RECESS (APRIL 16-24), OR AT ANOTHER CONVENIENT TIME.

(E) SENATOR KENNEDY'S STAFF REPRESENTATIVES CONTINUE TO AWAIT WORD FROM DRV ON WHEN THEY SHOULD COME TO ACCEPT THE REMAINS OF THE MARINES.

(F) THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 30 MONGOLOID REMAINS AT JCRC, AND THE LIMITED DATA ON THOSE REMAINS WILL BE UPCOMING.

(G) WITH REGARD TO MAPS WE NEED FURTHER INFORMATION AS TO THE SCALES DESIRED AND THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH THE MAPS ARE NEEDED.

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(H) WE ARE OBTAINING OTHER INFORMATION REQUESTED AND WILL PROVIDE AS SOON AS AVAILABLE.

8. SUGGEST YOU LIMIT ENCLOSURES AT THIS STAGE TO YOUR CLIPPINGS ON RELEASE OF AMERICANS AND COPIES OF PRESIDENT'S DECEMBER 7 HONOLULU SPEECH. CONCUR WITH YOUR REF B JUDGEMENT RE PILGER BOOK.

9. FYI: WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE THREE REMAINS GIVEN TO SELECT COMMITTEE IN DECEMBER WERE IN EXTRAORDINARILY GOOD CONDITION AND READILY IDENTIFIABLE, WHICH SUGGESTS THAT DRV MAY HAVE OTHER REMAINS IN LESS PRIME CONDITION. WE HOPE TO CONVINCE DRV TO RETURN THOSE REMAINS AS WELL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. END FYI. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY PERSONNEL, KIA, MIA, DEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATIONS, IDENTITY DOCUMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: vogelfj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE035160
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: FASIEVERTS:JS
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760054-0599
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760253/aaaabutx.tel
Line Count: 168
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 VIENTIANE 332, 76 VIENTIANE 359
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 MAY 2004 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <20 SEP 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LETTER FROM UNHCR REP IN HANOI REGARDING MARINE REMAINS AND RELATED MATTERS
TAGS: CASC, PFOR, VS, US, UNHCR, (HAN)
To: VIENTIANE JCRC SAMAE SAN THAI
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006